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ABSTRACT

Brief description of the focus of five areas of research into higher education conducted by the National Swedish Board of Universities and Colleges are presented. These five research or problem areas are as follows: the role of higher education in society, higher education as a system (structure and governance), the environment and working methods of research, the environment and working methods of teaching, and research and development organization and planning. The scope and working methods of the overall research program are discussed, and the following information is provided: the distribution of money between areas and subjects, a list of research projects in progress, conferences and problem area meetings held in recent years, and a current list of knowledge and problem surveys in connection with the research program. Among the specific research projects are the following: followup surveys of the importance of education in connection with the vocational choices, incomes, and further education interest of individuals; the way that knowledge and values essential to the vocational role are learned in a number of professional courses of studies; the connection between the formal and informal elements of the processes of governance; the emergence of reform of higher education; international comparative studies of university and higher education organization; and questions relating to the role and organization of sectoral research in higher education (SW)

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R & D for Higher Education

INFORMATION ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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RESEARCH INTO HIGHER EDUCATION
AN OVERVIEW

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this research programme which was started in 1971 is to contribute towards better insight concerning the character, conditions and significance of higher education activities. In this way the programme constitutes an important supplement to other R & D work and to long-term planning and reform work in the field of higher education. Activities under this programme are conducted on a continuous basis and without any direct link with or reference to current reform processes.

The problem areas (see below) are studied by means of analytical knowledge surveys and empirical studies with a view to the gradual evolution of concepts and conceptual models which will contribute towards an understanding of higher education and its role in society.

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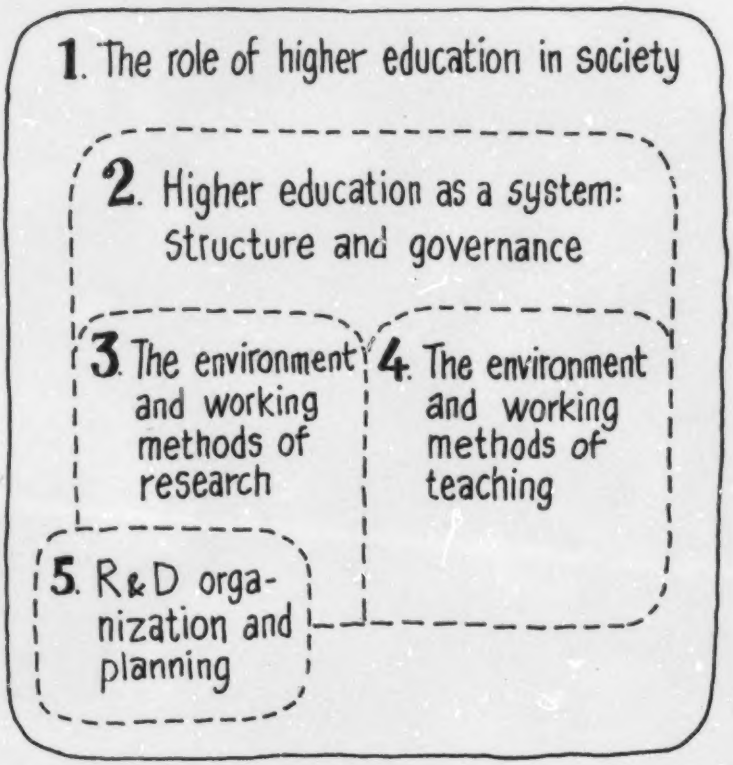
Problem areas for research into higher education


1. The role of higher education in society
2. Higher education as a system: structure and governance
3. The environment and working methods of research
4. The environment and working methods of teaching
5. R&D organization and planning

The development of new modes of description and methods of analysis forms a long-term process in which various images and approaches are contrasted in a continuous interaction. This work is time-consuming, not least because research has to be rooted in the concepts and methods of various disciplines. One of the fundamental requirements applying to these research activities is that projects must be established on a sound theoretical footing, must be closely geared to international research in the field and must focus on problems which are expected to have an important bearing on the future as well as the present organization of higher education. It should be made clear that the problem area boundaries have been defined with the aim of achieving greater clarity by highlighting some of the main aspects of higher

education and research activities, and also with the aim of providing some common points of reference for the variegated flora of projects. At the same time, one of the principal aims of the programme is to facilitate interaction between different approaches to problems of higher education and to do so partly by encouraging the transcendence of subject boundaries.

Brief descriptions will now be given of the research focus of the various problem areas. Finally, a short description will be given of the working methods of the programme. Individual research projects are presented in separate newsletters.

This newsletter has four appendices: (1) the scope of the research programme and the distribution of money between areas and subjects, (2) a list of research projects in progress, (3) conferences and problem area meetings held in recent years, and (4) a current list of knowledge and problem surveys in connection with the research programme.

INTERIM REPORTS BY PROBLEM AREA

Brief descriptions now follow of the focus of research in the various problem areas.

The role of higher education in society. In problem area 1, special importance is attached to studies of the role of higher education in working life. To begin with, this mainly involved relatively simple follow-up surveys of the importance of education in connection with the vocational choices, incomes and further educational interest of individual persons. Some of the projects now underway are aimed at elucidating the way in which the knowledge and values essential to the vocational role are learned in a number of professional courses of studies (economics, engineering, medicine and psychology). An investigation is being made of the students' concept formation and cognitive development and of the way in which they acquire attitudes and values concerning what is essential to their professions. In another project a study is being made of differences of cognitive capacity and communicative proficiency among various active professional groups, e g secondary school teachers and persons holding degrees from technical and medical faculties.

It should be noted that, in this problem area particularly, the National Board of Universities and Colleges (NBUC) is collaborating with other Swedish research-promoting bodies. Thus efforts are being made in conjunction with the Working Life Centre, the Council for Planning and Co-ordination of Research and the National Board of Education to compile an inventory of crucial questions and to

initiate studies concerning actual or conceivable changes in division of labour and work organization within various sectors of society and their relevance to higher education activities.

Higher education as a system. Problem area 2 is concerned with questions relating to institutional organization, and the focus of interest here is partly on the connection between the formal and informal elements of the processes of governance.

Two projects are being made to focus particularly on the emergence of the reform of higher education and on the actual implementation of the reform. In another project, an attempt is being made to collect and analyse the attitudes and values of higher education teachers and researchers concerning their own activities and the frames for those activities.

Historical analyses and international comparisons are highly important here, and Sweden is now participating, partly through a number of the projects in this programme, in a number of international comparative studies of university and higher education organization.

Another question which is more concerned with ideological content than with outward organization and which is now being dealt with in a number of co-ordinated projects at the University of Gothenburg focusses on the knowledge traditions of various programmes of higher education; this research involves, for example, the participation of historians of ideas and learning, sociologists and theory of science specialists. The starting point of these studies (which also touch on the next two problem areas of the research programme) is the interaction within the new higher education system of traditionally academic and non-academic study programmes. Among other things these studies are aimed at identifying the values and attitudes characteristic of a number of new programmes of higher education and what fundamental ideas about knowledge, people and society they express. The intention is that such surveys will clarify the widening of the concept of higher education which has taken place and thus promote research which is also suitably designed for the development of more practically based knowledge.

In problem areas 3 and 4, studies are being made of the *environment and working methods of research and teaching*. Research

as a higher education activity has been dealt with in a couple of surveys and in a couple of major empirical studies (concerning the role of research training in a number of the human sciences and concerning interdisciplinary groups in natural science research). These inquiries are now nearing completion.

Problem area 3, which has come in for special attention at several project seminars and on other occasions, has been given high priority for new ventures during the next few years. A certain amount of collaboration has been established with the Council for Planning and Co-ordination of Research and other bodies with regard to problem identification and the initiation of projects.

Teaching as an activity (problem area 4) has so far occupied a far more central position in the higher education research programme than research. This problem area is concerned with problems relating to the structuring of cognitive content, concept formation and knowledge acquisition, the design of the study and teaching process, and the role of critical training in various study programmes.

In problem area 5, *R & D organization and planning*, studies are being made of questions relating to the role and organization of sectoral research in higher education and the interaction of planning and knowledge development. Inputs in this field are justified by the great importance of sectoral research as an element of higher education activities and also by the need to find tenable principles for R & D within the higher education system itself. Balances need to be struck, for example, between sectorization and general perspective and between current reform tasks and fundamental, long-range issues.

WORKING METHODS

Finally, here are some viewpoints in brief concerning the working methods of the research programme. A more ample description, dealing also with reporting procedures and the possible meaning of "useful results", was published in "R & D for Higher Education" 1979:6. An up-to-date list of knowledge and problem surveys under the research programme will be found in Appendix 4. As stated earlier, one of the purposes of these surveys is to contrast the perspectives of various disciplines regarding basic issues of higher education, both with each other and with the approaches implied by policy making and practical implementation. These surveys ought therefore to record and elucidate differences within and between groups of researchers and practitioners regarding the description and analysis of the fundamental problems of higher education.

Diversity and long-range relevance are two of the main requirements which have to be met by research into higher education. Diversity has been provided for in that the higher education research financed by the NBUC during the past six years has enlisted the services of researchers from twelve different subjects (seven subjects in the social sciences and five in the humanities). At present long-term relevance and continuity are mainly being provided for by awarding project grants for three-year or six-year periods. It should be made clear, however, that research into higher education, like any other long-term sectoral research, needs to be given a clearer and firmer research basis than is possible by means of annual project grants.

Thus the research programme is to a great extent multi-disciplinary, and it is also aimed at achieving close interaction between the approaches and perspectives of the various disciplines in dealing with the various fields of inquiry. Out of a total of more than 70 projects, 40 have now been completed while upwards of 30 are in progress. So far 21 doctoral theses have been presented as part of the projects. Another 14 are in preparation, and most of them should be completed in 1980 or 1981.

As has already been made clear, the research programme's task of showing basic issues of higher education in a new light has acquired added importance as a result of the reform of the higher education system. The emphasis of the programme on a function of insight and understanding rather than one of problem solving has, in NBUC's opinion, gained increasing acceptance in recent years. Accordingly, the programme is being steered in all essential respects by discussions in the form of seminars and conferences. The fields in which the programme has been structured provide only a general indication of the types of problems which are considered relevant for consideration in a long-term perspective. Activities within the programme are evolving in a dialogue, with the selection of projects being guided at least as much by research criteria as by the practitioners' assessments of what is relevant. The utilization of research, similarly, is also a predominantly indirect process and, in the short run at all events, is less visible and palpable than the benefit of purely result- and measure-oriented R & D work.

In adopting this approach, research into higher education addresses itself to a wide circle of people who, as decision makers, members of drafting committees or leaders of opinion, have a hand in shaping the higher education of the future. The knowledge surveys and the research groups of

the programme should therefore, in NBUC's opinion, play an increasingly useful part in an intensified debate concerning the basic problems of higher education. This debate ought gradually to be provided with new procedures to supplement the traditional contacts between the various sub-sectors and levels of the higher education system, e g conferences at local and regional levels and as part of staff training. As indicated in the NBUC Budget Requests for the fiscal year 1981/82, the possibility is also being contemplated of a special journal for the analysis and discussion of basic issues of higher education.

Eskil Björklund

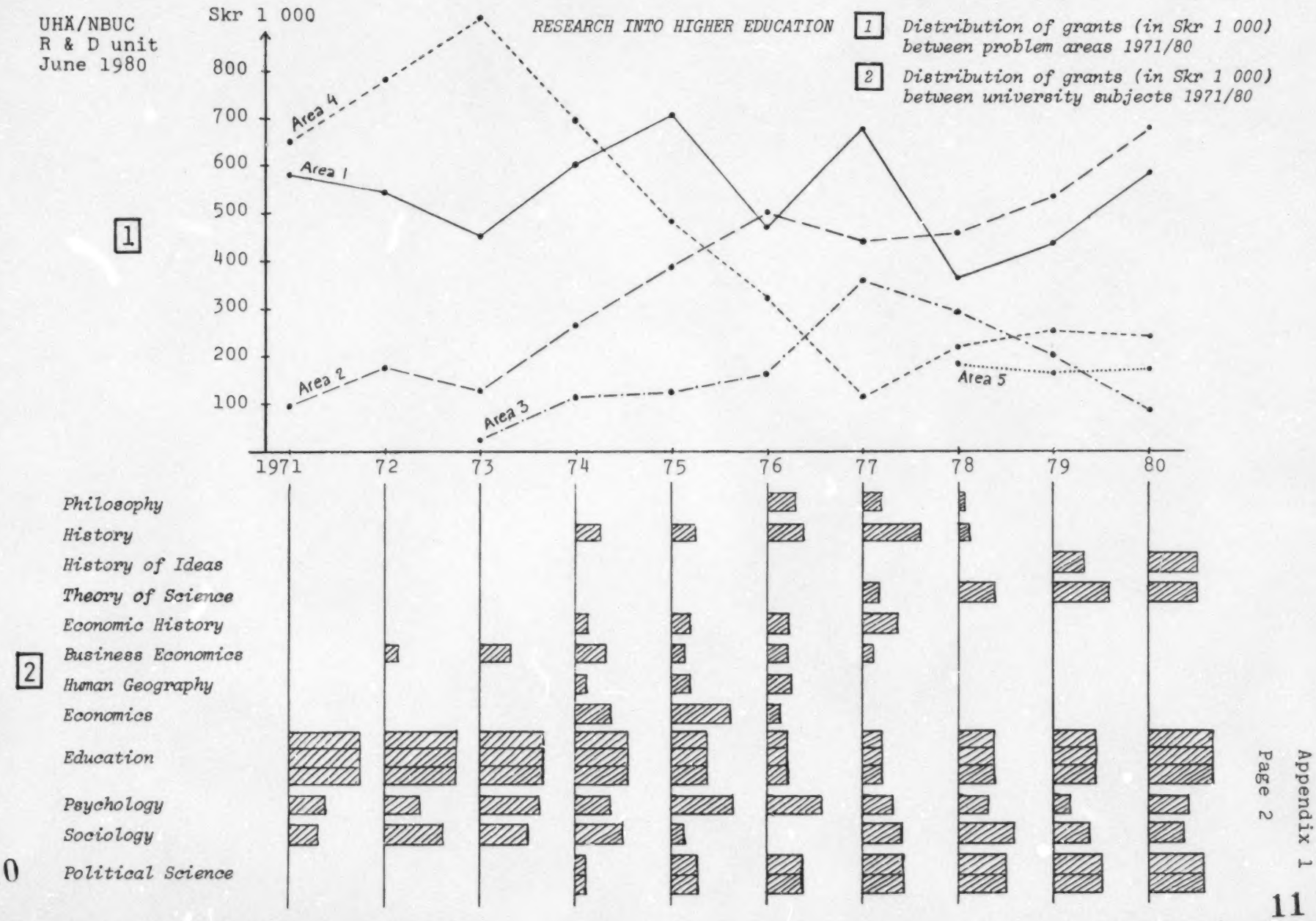
1980-06-30

RESEARCH INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

Distribution of the projects between problem areas 1977/78--1980/81
(Skr 1 000)

PROBLEM AREA etc	*1977/78*	*1978/79*	*1979/80*	*1980/81*
1. The role of higher education in society	*675*	*360*	*435*	*585*
2. Higher education as a system	*435*	*455*	*540*	*680*
3. The environment and working methods of research	*355*	*285*	*200*	*90*
4. The environment and working methods of teaching	*110*	*215*	*250*	*245*
5. R & D organization and planning	*-*	*180*	*160*	*175*
Planning of research, conferences, knowledge surveys etc	*225*	*265*	*175*	*225*
TOTAL	*1 800*	*1 760*	*1 760*	*2 000*

UHÄ/NBUC
R & D unit
June 1980



RESEARCH INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

Current projects

In the following list, "F" indicates that the project will be finished in 1980/81 and "C" that it will be continuing in 1981/82. "R" indicates major research reports appearing in 1980 or 1981, while "D" indicates doctoral theses appearing in 1980 or 1981. References also include the issue numbers of newsletters. "N" refers to newsletters appearing in 1980 or 1981.

Area 1. *The role of higher education in society*

The role of higher education in the development of the individual (Prof. David Magnusson, Psychology)	C			79:3
Post-secondary education and background (Prof. Torsten Husén, Education)	F		D	N
Aspects of education and the division of labour (Ass. Prof. Bengt Gesser, Sociology)	F	R	D	N
Education and the labour market (Prof. Lars Werin et al., Economics)	F		DD	N
The expansion of the education sector in Sweden during the 20th century (Prof. Lennart Jörberg, Economic History)	F	R	DD	N
The equalizing effects of the educational reforms (Ass. Prof. Ingemar Fägerlind, Education)	F	R		N
Higher education, the labour market, and economic development (Prof. Ingemar Ståhl, Economics)	P l a n n i n g			
Conceptions of reality - a study of cognitive changes in university students (Ass. Prof. Lars Owe Dahlgren, Education)	C			N
Long-term effects of higher education /the LONG project/ (Prof. Sten Henrysson, Education)	C			80:3
Long-term effects of education among post-secondary students (Prof. Kjell Härnqvist, Education)	C			80:4

Area 2. *Higher education as a system*

Alternative educational structures in the northern educational region (Ass. Prof. Nils Häggström, Geography)	F		D	N
Production and productivity of Swedish universities (Prof. Ingemar Ståhl, Economics)	F	R	D	N
The university as an organization: system and environment (Ass. Prof. Jan-Erik Lane, Political Science)	F	R	D	N
Obstacles to innovation within the university organization (Prof. Anders Edström, Business Economics)	F		D	N
A study of the origins of the reform of higher education (Prof. Olof Ruin, Political Science)	F		D	N
A study of the implementation of the reform of higher education (Dr. Yngve Myrman, Political Science)	F	R		N
Problems of management and decision-making in higher education (Prof. Dick Ramström, Business Economics)	F	R		N
Attitudes in higher education. A survey of post-secondary teachers (Ass. Prof. Jan-Erik Lane, Political Science)	F	R		79:5
From cultivation to qualification. A study of the development of Swedish universities (Dr. Lennart Svensson, Sociology)	F	R		N
The process of implementation of higher education reforms (Dr. Ladislav Cerych, Inst of Education)	F	R		79:4
Ideology, science and society (Prof. Sven-Eric Liedman, History of Ideas)	C	R		N
Educational and research ideologies (Ass. Prof. Aant Elzinga, Theory of Science)	C			N
The link with research and with working life (Prof. Edmund Dahlström, Sociology)	F	R		N
A book on Roskilde University Centre (Jan Annerstedt, Lecturer, Political Science)	F	R		

	Planning			
Knowledge traditions for the training of pre-school teachers (Prof. Ference Marton, Education)				
Area 3. *The environment and working methods of research*				
The results of research training (Prof. Birgitta Odén, History)	F	R		N
Interdisciplinary research groups (Ass. Prof. Jan Bärmark, Dr. Göran Wallén, Theory of Science)	F	R	D	78:5 (In Swedish)
Identification and problem solving style in relation to choice of subject, direction of research and research aptitude (Psychologist Margot Bengtsson, Psychology)	C			79:11
Colloquia on scientific development, the organization of research and research careers (Ass. Prof. Aant Elzinga, Theory of Science)	F	R		
Research policy in Finland, Norway and Sweden (Prof. Olof Ruin, Political Science)	F	R		
Area 4. *The environment and working methods of teaching*				
The pedagogics of problem solving (Prof. Lennart Sjöberg, Psychology)	F		D	79:10
Critical training in higher education (Prof. Sören Halldén, Philosophy)	F	R		N
Study skill in mechanics (Ass. Prof. Lennart Svensson, Education)	C			79:9
Study interest (Prof. Lennart Sjöberg, Psychology)	C			N
Area 5. *R & D organization and planning*				
Practitioners and social scientists - planning and the utilization of social science (Prof. Edmund Dahlström, Sociology)	F	R	D	78:5
R & D and public policy-making (Dr. Björn Wittrock, Political Science)	C	R		80:2

RESEARCH INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

Problem area meetings: concern

Area

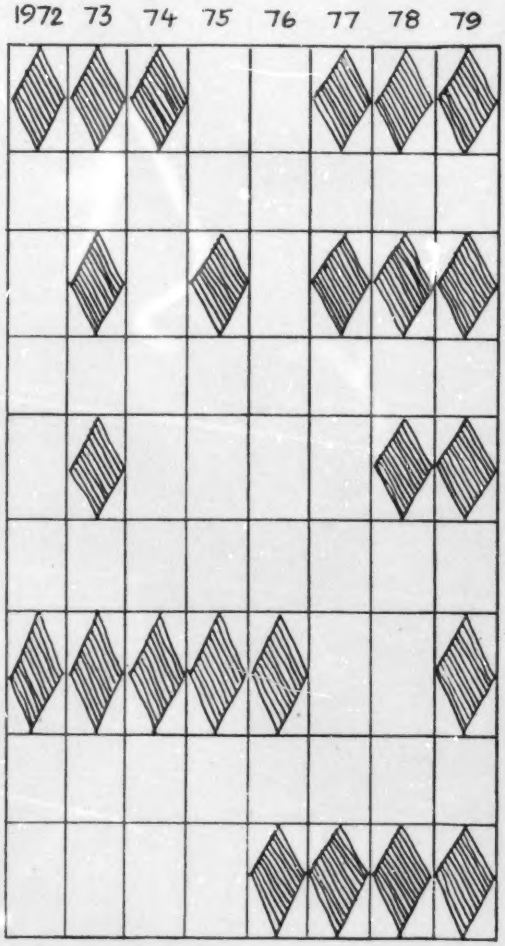
1 The role of higher education in society
(Sociology, economics, econ history psychology, education)

2 Higher education as a system
(Political science, sociology, economics, geography, theory of science, history of ideas)

3 The environment and working forms of research
(Psychology, sociology, history, education history of ideas, theory of science)

4 The environment and working methods of teaching
(Education, psychology, sociology, philosophy)

5 R&D organization and planning
(Sociology, political science)



RESEARCH INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

Knowledge and problem surveys

(Distributed by the R & D unit; No.s 5, 7, 12 and 15 are in English, the others in Swedish)

Year	No.	Title	Problem Area
1973	1	The activity forms for research training, UKÄ Report 1973:1 (160 p)	3
	2	Evaluation of a reform of higher education, UKÄ Report 1973:2 (277 p)	2, 4
1975	3	Methodological problems in studies of the relation between higher education and the labour market, UKÄ Report 1975:1 (83 p)	1
	4	Methodological problems in university studies in groups, UKÄ Report 1975:16 (195 p)	4
1976	5	Strategies for research and development in higher education, Educational Research Symposium, Swets & Zeitlinger, Amsterdam, 1976 (279 p)	2, 4, 5
	6	The specification of problems and the initiation of research for the field of education, UHÄ et al., Oct. 1976 (91 p)	5
1977	7	The creation and support of a research community on higher education, Martin Trow, R & D for Higher Education 1977:3 (16 p)	3, 5
	8	Concept formation and learning in some university subjects, UHÄ Report 1977:3 (156 p)	4
	9	The research nexus. The link between research and undergraduate teaching, Bengt Abrahamsson, UHÄ Report 1977:10 (81 p)	3, 4
	10	Research into the organization of higher education, UHÄ Report 1977:20 (174 p)	2, 5
	11	The role of higher education in society, report from a project seminar, Nov. 1977, stencil (30 p)	1

Year	No.	Title	Problem Area
1978	12	Learning and Earning. Three essays in the economics of education. (M J Bowman, Å Sohlman, B-C Ysander). National Board of Universities and Colleges, 1978 (272 p)	1
	13	Studies of research and planning systems, and studies of concept formation and the development of values, report from a project seminar, Oct. 1978, stencil (21 p)	1, 3, 5
1979	14	Division of labour, class stratification and knowledge development, Edmund Dahlström, UHÄ Report 1979:2 (38 p)	1, 2
	15	Research into Higher Education:Processes and Structures, National Board of Universities and Colleges, 1979 (358 p)	1, 2, 5
1980	16	Knowledge traditions in programmes of higher education, UHÄ Report 1980:4 (67 p)	2, 3, 5
	17	Working life perspectives for research into education, Leif Grahm (ed), UHÄ Report 1980:9 (341 p)	1, 2
	18	Conceptions of knowledge and choices of content in some programmes of higher education, UHÄ Report 1980:10 (159 p)	4
	19	Studies of long-term planning and of sectoral research, UHÄ Report 1980:14 (125 p)	1, 3, 5